

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COPENH 00289 141828Z
ACTION EUR-12

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E.O.: 11652: N/A
TAGS: MPOL, NATO, MILI, US, DA
SUBJ: DANISH DEFENSE POLICY DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT

SUMMARY: YESTERDAY'S (JAN 13) DEBATE IN FOLKETING ONCE AGAIN DEMONSTRATED THAT A LARGE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY SUPPORTS A RELATIVELY FIRM DANISH DEFENSE POLICY. IN MANY WAYS, THE DEBATE OTHERWISE WAS A NON-EVENT. IT BROUGHT NO SOLUTION TO THE PROLONGED PROBLEM OF A NEW DANISH DEFENSE AGREEMENT AND, IN FACT, NO IMMEDIATE RESOLUTION SEEMS PROBABLE. OF INTEREST, HOWEVER, WAS THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY'S REALLY FIRST WHOLEHEARTED ATTEMPT TO SHOW THAT IT SUPPORTS A STRONG DANISH DEFENSE, EVEN IF INCREASED APPROPRIATIONS MIGHT BE NEEDED TO MAKE DEFENSE "CREDIBLE". END SUMMARY.

1. AT THE REQUEST OF THE THREE PARTIES OF THE FAR LEFT--THE COMMUNISTS, THE LEFT SOCIALISTS, AND THE SOCIALIST PEOPLE'S PARTY--THE FOLKETING YESTERDAY DEVOTED ALL DAY TO A DEBATE ON DANISH DEFENSE AND SECURITY POLICY. ALTHOUGH SUCH DEBATES IN THE PAST OFTEN WERE CONDUCTED IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF CONTENTION,
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PAGE 02 COPENH 00289 141828Z

THIS DEBATE TURNED OUT TO BE A RATHER PEACEFUL REHERSAL OF KNOWN PARTY POSITIONS, EXCEPT FOR MOGENS GLISTRUP'S PROGRESSIVES.

2. SPEAKING FOR THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT. DEFENSE MINISTER ORLA MOELLER SAID THAT "THE ELEMENTS OF UNCERTAINTY FOR THE WESTERN WORLD HAVE INCREASED. THERE IS, THEREFORE, NOTHING

THAT POINTS TO A REDUCTION OF THE DEFENSE EFFORTS OF NATO OR DENMARK OVER THE COMING YEARS". REFERRING TO THE ARMS BUILD-UP BY THE WARSAW PACT, MOELLER ADDED "IT WOULD NOT BE POLITICALLY RESPONSIBLE TO CLOSE OUR EYES TO DEVELOPMENTS WHICH, IF WORST COMES TO WORST, MAY DECISIVELY TILT THE BALANCE OF POWER IN EUROPE". MOELLER ALSO MENTIONED THE INCREASE IN THE PURCHASE PRICE OF THE F-16 WHICH HE ATTRIBUTED TO ADDED GROUND EQUIPMENT, DIFFICULTIES OF INDUSTRY IN MEETING TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND PURCHASES OF SPECIAL MANUFACTURING EQUIPMENT. HE SAID THE PRICE INCREASE WOULD BE APPROXIMATELY TEN PERCENT.

3. THE ADVOCATES OF A RELATIVELY STRONG DANISH DEFENSE--THE CONSERVATIVES, THE LIBERALS, THE CENTER DEMOCRATS AND THE CHRISTIANS--ALL REITERATED THEIR STAND AND DEPLORED THE GOVERNMENT'S INABILITY TO RESOLVE THE IMPASSE IN THE CURRENT DEFENSE NEGOTIATIONS. THE RADICALS, ON THE OTHER HAND, REPEATED THEIR OBJECTIONS TO THE NEW DEFENSE AGREEMENT.

4. PROGRESS PARTY DEFENSE SPOKESMAN, KJELD WAMBERG, SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME TRYING TO CHANGE THE POPULAR IMAGE OF THE PARTY CREATED SOME YEARS AGO BY FOUNDER MOGENS GLISTRUP WHEN HE CALLED FOR A DANISH DEFENSE SYSTEM LIMITED TO A RECORDED SURRENDER MESSAGE IN RUSSIAN. IT IS TRUE, WAMBERG SAID, THAT "ONE OF OUR MEMBERS (GLISTRUP) EXPRESSED HIS POSITION ON DANISH DEFENSE IN THIS SOMEWHAT EXTRAVAGANT WAY, BUT OUR PARTY IS DEMOCRATIC WITH MAJORITY RULE AND THE PARTICULAR MEMBER ACCEPTS THE MAJORITY OPINION THAT WE WANT A STRONG AND CREDIBLE DEFENSE". ALL 23 MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP WOULD EVEN SUPPORT INCREASED APPROPRIATIONS IF THESE ARE REQUIRED, HE ADDED. WAMBERG CALLED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 COPENH 00289 141828Z

FOR A DEFENSE AGREEMENT OF SIX YEARS AND SAID THE GOVERNMENT ACTED IRRESPONSIBLY BY NOT INCLUDING THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY IN THE ON-GOING DEFENSE NEGOTIATIONS.

5. THE DEBATE ENDED WITH TWO VOTES: A COMMUNIST MOTION CALLING ON THE GOVERNMENT NOT TO ENTER INTO A LONG-TERM DEFENSE AGREEMENT WHICH WOULD PRECLUDE REDUCTIONS IN MILITARY EXPENDITURES WAS DEFEATED (145-20-1); A MOTION CALLING ON THE GOVERNMENT "TO BRING THE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE DEFENSE AGREEMENT TO A POSITIVE CONCLUSION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE" WAS PASSED (144-20-2).

6. COMMENT: WHILE THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR A DEFENSE AGREEMENT WERE MENTIONED DURING THE POLICY DEBATE, THE AGREEMENT ITSELF WAS NOT AN ISSUE. SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS HAVE SPECULATED THE NON-SOCIALIST PARTIES HAD CONCURRED IN ADVANCE NOT TO EXPLOIT THE DEBATE IN AN ATTEMPT TO TOPPLE THE GOVERNMENT. FEW, IF ANY, OF THE NON-SOCIALIST PARTIES WOULD LIKE TO FACE AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN WITH DEFENSE AS A MAJOR ISSUE.

7. ALTHOUGH THE EXPECTED LARGE MAJORITY FOR A NEW REASONABLE
DEFENSE AGREEMENT WAS SHOWN IN YESTERDAY'S DEBATE, THE SOCIAL
DEMOCRATS MAINTAINED THEIR POSITION OF REFUSAL TO PROCEED WITH-
OUT THE RADICALS.
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